

"Fire hydrant flushing allows us to eliminate or expel sediments and other solids that might collect in our mains...This is a bi-annual program. Flushing is done by opening fire hydrants and letting the water rush out."

-Passage from Division of Water and Sewer's "Services" page of Harford County, Maryland's Department of Public Works web page. (Perhaps more surprising than the fact that they have a web page is the fact that the Harford County Department of Public Works has an environmental education program. You gotta wanna meet whoever is behind that. See the web page at [www.co.ha.md.us/dpw/ws/](http://www.co.ha.md.us/dpw/ws/))

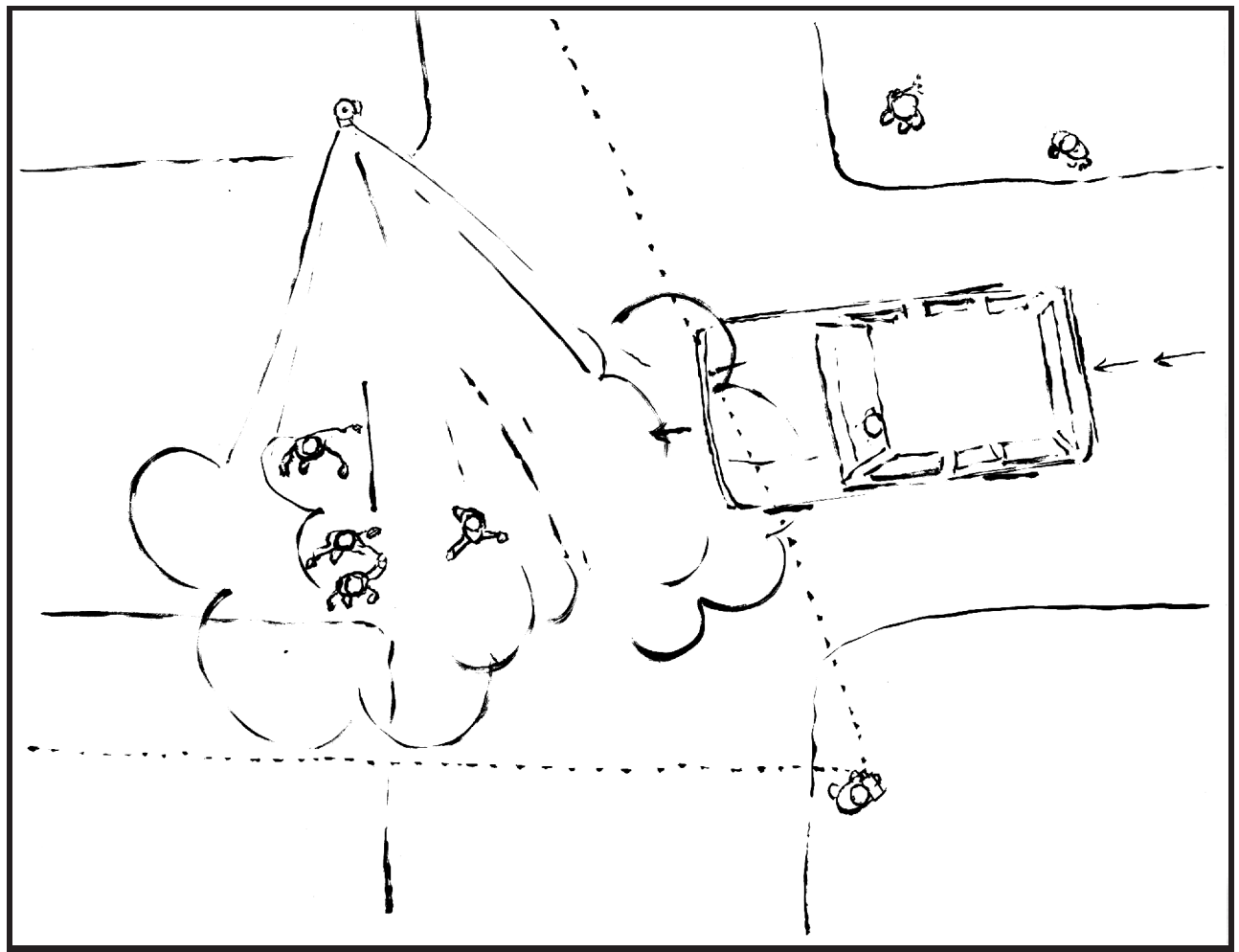
**Cambell and LeMoyne, July 31, 2002**

This is some semblance of a public presentation of about 37 minutes of video that I shot but chose not to edit. I shot it on a very hot day, July 31, 2002, just up the street from my apartment in Chicago's Humboldt Park neighborhood. During the last leg of my evening commute, the walk from the train to my apartment, I noticed the open hydrant and all of the activity around it. I knew right away that I had to get a closer look, but decided stop home real quick to put on a more comfortable shirt and grab my camera and to make a home video of something that struck me as uncommonly picturesque.

#### Heat Wave

Eric Klinenberg wrote a book about a natural disaster which happened in Chicago in 1995, a heat wave that killed more than 800 people. Those who died tended to be the elderly and minorities living in low-income neighborhoods. Throughout the book Klinenberg shows that the growing trends of social isolation and fear were key factors producing this outrageous death toll. Here is a passage from the book, *Heat Wave: A Social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago*, describing a local news cast from Thursday, July 13, 1995:

*Producers lead the news with footage of the sun setting in a smog-filled sky and radiating the number 104 in burnt-orange figures on the screen. [Anchorman, John] Drury, again at the anchor's desk, noted the record temperature and warned that "the heat isn't over yet." The cameras skipped to a public swimming pool crammed with dozens of children, then to a street scene of dozens more dancing in the spray of a fire hydrant, one of three thousand...opened that day. The image of young people frolicking in water had already become an emblem for heat wave coverage. It would recur throughout the week, seamlessly woven into video sequences containing shots of dead bodies, exhausted relief workers, city officials, and weather maps to make a surreal mosaic of the steaming city.*



#### Nice Try Though

Despite the efforts of various city authorities, open fire hydrants are not uncommon on hot days in Humboldt Park. Across the street from my apartment there is a play lot with a fountain designed for kids to play in on hot summer days. It was built partly in the hopes that it would prevent people from opening hydrants on hot days.

#### Warming Center

From January 25 to February 16, 2001 the Chicago collective, Temporary Services did a project called "Warming Center," during which they opened a downtown office space up to the public, offering hot drinks, snacks, massages, reading materials and conversation--a temporary refuge from the cold. To read more about this check out their webpage, [www.temporaryservices.org](http://www.temporaryservices.org).

#### Me and My Neighbors

When it comes to my relationship with my neighbors there are probably plenty of things to say. I spend a lot of my time working to get involved and participate in the Chicago art world, it is an all too rare circumstance when these efforts bring me closer to my neighbors. My job, which I seem to need to survive, also takes time that could be spent with my neighbors. In the Summer of 2001 I became a close friend of Michael Martinez, self-appointed neighborhood organizer and gardener. He used to live right down the street, taught me a lot about the neighborhood, and introduced me to a lot my neighbors. Ever since he moved to El Paso I'm struggling to find ways to have direct relationships with my neighbors. Michael told me that when he was young fire fighters from the local station would open hydrants on hot days and supervise the kids as they played in the cooling torrents of water. I miss Michael.